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Senate

IN CELEBRATION OF BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS AWARDS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate the selection of Booker T. Washington Elementary School as a No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Award recipient. This prestigious honor is awarded to exemplary schools that meet one of two criteria. The nominated school must have at least 40 percent of a nominated school's student population come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and each segment—including Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, low-income and special education students must show scholastic improvement, or the school must score in the top 10 percent on State achievement tests. This is a well deserved honor for Booker T. Washington Elementary School, attesting to years of tireless commitment that this school, as well as the First State, brings to educating our youth.

Booker T. Washington Elementary School is located in historic Dover, DE, the State's Capital. The school was founded in 1919 to serve approximately 240 African-American children from two schools in the downtown Dover area. Today, the school serves

approximately 350 students. Booker T. Washington's student body is now comprised of 56 percent African American, 2 percent Asian American, 8 percent Hispanic, and 34 percent Caucasian students. Twenty-three percent of the students are identified as special needs students. Approximately 9 percent of the students have limited English proficiency. Forty-four percent of the students qualify as low income. The school's small size and culturally rich student and staff population enhance the educational and social-emotional growth of the children and affords the school the opportunity to personalize the learning experience for the children.

The mission of Booker T. Washington is to offer the best educational program possible in order to develop the mind and character of each child. To accomplish this mission, the school has established a firm foundation in the core subject areas. Led by Principal Marcia Johnson, they have established high expectations for all children and communicate these expectations daily in the staffs' work with them. Booker T. Washington provides an environment

that celebrates and promotes understanding of self and others, and expects that everyone will behave in a manner that represents the standards that have been set for the school community. Booker T. Washington has established close working relationships with the parents and the community and depends on their support to help the school meet its goals.

Booker T. Washington's primary program nurtures the continuing growth of children's knowledge and understanding of themselves and their world. The remarkable growth of all children over the past 5 years is evident in the decreases in the achievement gaps between all subgroups of children served in the school. Not only is this school meeting yearly targets for all subgroups set by the State and capital school district, but they are also moving more children into higher achievement levels. The growth that children have made is also a direct result of staff members' use of data to make instructional decisions and their willingness to change their instructional practices by participating in professional development activities based on best practices. Collaborative decisionmaking and the participation of parents and the community in the decisionmaking process have added to Booker T. Washington's success.

The faculty and staff view themselves as a work in progress. They understand how far they have come over the past 5 years to change the community's perception of their school and to provide instructional activities that will move children toward the goals the district, State, and No Child Left Behind legislation have set for them as learners. Five years ago, there were vast

differences in student achievement in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Today, although some discrepancies remain, the gap has narrowed significantly and continues to close. The school's selection as a national blue ribbon school is a testament to their hard work and dedication.

Delaware is a small State, but we are building a growing record of achievement in public school education. Helping lead the way are the students at Booker T. Washington Elementary School, along with their teachers and parents. Collectively, they are truly an inspiration to other schools and communities in Delaware and throughout our Nation.

Today we also celebrate the selection of Long Neck Elementary School as a No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Award recipient. This prestigious honor is awarded to exemplary schools that meet one of two criteria. The nominated school must have at least 40 percent of a nominated school's student population come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and each segment--including Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, low-income and special education students--must show scholastic improvement, or the school must score in the top 10 percent on State achievement tests. This is a well deserved honor for Long Neck Elementary School, attesting to years of tireless commitment that this school, as well as the First State, brings to educating our youth. It is also the fourth elementary school from the Indian River School District to receive this national recognition, a remarkable accomplishment for any school district.

It is not surprising that such an award is bestowed upon a school committed to the philosophy that all students can achieve academic success. The teachers and staff at Long Neck Elementary, led by Principal Charlynn Hopkins, are steadfast in their schoolwide goal that all students are expected to meet Delaware's academic standards. Furthermore, Long Neck Elementary is dedicated to encouraging students to not only meet these standards but to exceed them regardless of their limitations.

Long Neck Elementary School is located in the rural town of Millsboro, DE. The school is composed of a large percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Over half of the school's 522 students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Long Neck Elementary houses a diverse population of students from prekindergarten to the fifth grade. The racially diverse student body includes students from all ethnic backgrounds, including African American, Hispanic, and American Indian. In addition, Long Neck Elementary has an academically diverse student population. The school offers an EXCEL program for high achieving students as well as an intensive learning center and other special education services for struggling learners. It is by combining the efforts of the entire school family that the needs of students at Long Neck Elementary are met and exceeded.

At Long Neck Elementary, the school family consists of parents, teachers, support staff and community members, all working together collaboratively for the benefit and growth of its students. An active and continually growing parent teacher organization there works

to enable parents to support their school and their children. In addition, parents and community members partner with the school through its Creative Mentoring program, classroom volunteer opportunities, an "adopt a class" program, and a weekly career corner on the Long Neck Elementary School's televised news program. Lastly, the school improvement committee, which consists of staff, parents, and community members, identifies and allocates resources to enhance achievement for all students.

At Long Neck Elementary, students are not only challenged academically. They are also expected to demonstrate model behavior. Good citizenship is reinforced through a character education program where students are honored monthly with certificates and medals for demonstrating the six pillars of good character which promotes making positive choices and becoming a productive member of society.

No school could achieve the gains and progress Long Neck Elementary has met without having a staff that believes every child can learn and who are committed to providing students opportunities to reach their fullest potential. Long Neck Elementary has implemented professional learning communities where teachers work closely together, both within and across grade levels, to promote learning. All members of the staff assist students in improving their academic performances, increasing the likelihood that they will find success through their school years and go on to become productive and active members of society. This is done through after school programs, differentiated instruction, and extra support programs.

In addition, instructional staff members participate in numerous learning-focused professional development activities, which enable them to provide students with instructional strategies that are sound and research-based.

Tirelessness of staff and parents at Long Neck Elementary have made possible real progress in closing that school's achievement gap. Along with the National Blue Ribbon Schools Award, the school also earned ``Superior" rating from the State of Delaware in 2003, 2004, and 2005. Long

Neck Elementary School is a school that demonstrates that all students can learn. The school's selection as a national blue ribbon school is a testament to their hard work and dedication.

Delaware is a small State, but we are building a growing record of achievement in public school education. Helping lead the way are the students at Long Neck Elementary School, along with their teachers and parents. Collectively, they are truly an inspiration to other schools and communities in Delaware and throughout our Nation.